

Persona Non Grata

Some people are not welcome at the Iraqi reconstruction table.

The US Department of Defense issued a list of 63 countries whose companies would be welcome to bid for reconstruction contracts. But everyone knows that this was just a diplomatic way of issuing a list of countries that would **not** be welcome.

Here is that list:

France
Germany
Russia
China
Israel

Is there a common thread running through this list? **Andrew Sullivan** and **Steven Den Beste** both give an excellent explanation, and justification, but it covers only about – hmm – we estimate 80% of those cases. **Scrappleface** humorously suggests that in the interests of friendship, some exceptions should be made to the ban, where a particular country is in a position to make a specialised contribution that cannot reasonably be obtained elsewhere:

"For example, we have a pressing need for more of those terrific human shields. There were a lot of them around before the war, but we can't find them now. While we're figuring out where Saddam hid them, we would welcome some French, German or Russian human shields."

So some are asked to provide human shields while others provide **human sacrifices**.

All to further the greater purpose of the War on Terrorism.

We do not oppose this policy, by the way. But the depth of the irony of it is just another sign of how bad we have let things get.

Thu, 12/11/2003 - 17:00 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permlink](#)

The price of sanity

I guess that's the price you have to pay if you are being

consistently rational and sane in this mad and moronic world. It arouses hate and hate is bad for safe business.

-AIS

by a reader on Fri, 12/12/2003 - 06:54 | [reply](#)

rescind

Canada has been removed from the Coalescence of the Unwilling in recognition of making an effort in the rebuilding. I won't hold my breath, but Israel may be as well for training troops for urban operations.

John Anderson

by a reader on Fri, 12/12/2003 - 23:24 | [reply](#)

Canada?

What, did something change overnight?

by [Kevin](#) on Sat, 12/13/2003 - 02:37 | [reply](#)

Oh, all right then...

For the non-Canadians out there, what did change overnight was our government; the pettily anti-American Jean Chretien has finally retired, and his replacement Paul Martin has promised to repair relations with the US.

by a reader on Sat, 12/13/2003 - 19:23 | [reply](#)

Silliness

This is silly. Right to bid on international contracts has nothing to do with what silly leader has spoken or what silly political slight has been committed. It has everything to do with rules of international trade and industrial competence to deliver high quality goods or services in a timely, capable manner for the best price.

Otherwise? Playground politics.

German companies for example, what if anything do they have to do with a payback for not sending troops. German companies just happen to have a corporate headquarters on German soil. This rampant display of silliness raises all the questions of trade and internationality. That BMW plant with all american workers in the southern U.S., for example, sounds awfully German to me. Better not let them drive those German looking cars off the lot on to roads paid for by U.S. tax dollars, might look like a political statement about Germans, uber-capitalism, and Iraq. Worse, now they even have infiltrated the U.S. capital, BMW's in Washington D.C.!

As for the Canadians, no more hockey on U.S. ice. And so on.

If you ask what this has to do with rebuilding Iraq, my answer is

absolutely nothing. That is, nothing that makes any more sense than the US Department of Defense having silly payback rules about playing in some foreign sandbox.

I won't play with Canadians, Germans, French, Israelis, Russians, or Chinese any more, until they make up with me and say they're sorry. So There.

by a reader on Sun, 12/14/2003 - 20:47 | [reply](#)

ageism

stop equating countries acting badly with children, you fucking ageist

- Elliot

by a reader on Sun, 12/14/2003 - 23:13 | [reply](#)

Playground politics and the middle east sandbox

Everything I learned for good and bad about politics and diplomacy is found on the local playground and in the nearby sandbox. You may be getting the point all wrong, so watch your mouth, its always connected directly to your brain. Since you bring up children, in my opinion a child would not still be playing such silly one-up games. Only bully politicians do and some seem to think their bully playground is the world. They seem to get stupider with age. I am talking about chronological adults here. Most children would surely do much better with diplomacy, and for that matter politics, and if that's my ageist attitude, so be it.

Unfortunately only adults well above the age of consent get to play global political sandbox payback. First of all it is not their sandbox. Furthermore, unlike these playground bullies who play at middle east sandbox games, most individuals, French, Germans, Canadians and Americans, do not equate a few stupid feuding politicians with their host countries, or see it as a right to slight capable companies and to ignore the rules of international trade.

by a reader on Mon, 12/15/2003 - 03:49 | [reply](#)

Rules of international trade – and other puzzles

Which rule of international trade is being violated by this policy?

Why is "slighting capable companies" not a human right?

And if a child would not be playing such silly one-up games, whom did you observe doing so in your local playground and the nearby sandbox? Was it Saddam?

by **David Deutsch** on Mon, 12/15/2003 - 07:43 | [reply](#)

David said: Which rule of ...

David said:

Which rule of international trade is being violated by this policy?

I'm far from being an expert on international trade in goods and services, but my understanding was that while it's acceptable under the WTO treaties to discriminate on the basis of quality it's not acceptable to discriminate on the basis of country of origin. This is certainly suggested by

The national-treatment provision contains the obligation to treat foreign service suppliers and domestic service suppliers in the same manner. However, it does provide the possibility of different treatment being accorded the service providers of other parties to that accorded to domestic service providers. However, in such cases the conditions of competition should not, as a result, be modified in favour of the domestic service providers.

from **A Summary of the Final Act of the Uruguay Round**

- **Rich**

by **Rich** on Mon, 12/15/2003 - 11:12 | [reply](#)

Re: Which rule of international trade...?

These contracts – or at least, the bulk of them – are not covered by those treaties, according to the **EU trade commissioner**.

by **David Deutsch** on Mon, 12/15/2003 - 16:19 | [reply](#)

Customers Have a Right to Choose

It seems to me that customers (in this case the U.S. taxpayers via their representatives) have every right to discriminate among service suppliers. Usually, this means that it costs them in terms of price and/or quality; but they might value other things more than these costs. In this case, the U.S. wants to make it clear that supporting its national security interests has benefits, and obstructing them has costs. Some of these costs will be in terms of pressure from companies losing out, lost tax revenues, and national pride.

Is it unfair to qualified companies that happen to be based in disfavored countries? No. It's unequal, but not unfair. They have no natural right to these contracts. It's up to the customer to choose both the recipients of the contracts, and the criteria.

Gil

by **Gil** on Mon, 12/15/2003 - 17:59 | [reply](#)

Well said Gil, disfavored countries

Fact is Canada and Germany and Israel, to name a few apparently

are disfavored countries. Makes one wonder if they are a threat to U.S. national security.

by a reader on Mon, 12/15/2003 - 20:03 | [reply](#)

israel not in us disfavour

Israel isn't disfavored, and would have helped us fight, but it was better for both of us that they didn't. we didn't need the Arab world bitching about how the j00000s invaded Iraq.

my best guess at why they don't get contracts is the US is too pansy (*ahem*) to explain that we do like Israel, and don't like France, and instead wants to say the contracts thing wasn't based on a moral judgment, but rather a mechanical criterion about sending troops to help.

it's also possible the US has good reasons politically not to explain that right now, and knows screwing Israel on contracts isn't the end of the world. but if it was something sufficiently important we would not screw israel.

- Elliot

by a reader on Mon, 12/15/2003 - 20:23 | [reply](#)

Israel

Obviously, I wasn't including Israel in my reference to disfavored countries.

I think the main reason for excluding Israel was to avoid offending regional arabs. I think it's a mistake; but nobody ever accused me of being diplomatic, either.

Gil

by **Gil** on Tue, 12/16/2003 - 00:38 | [reply](#)

Also,

The question was raised by a reader what penalizing companies with headquarters on German (etc) soil could properly have to do with payback for not sending troops. It doesn't make sense to him so he calls it silly and "playground politics".

I'll let Elliott deal with the age-ism, I'd like to point out why it makes perfect sense to penalize companies with headquarters in country X for actions of country X we dislike. The reason is that if that company feels sufficient economic harm from the decision, they may be inclined to place pressure on the government which shelters them to change their (the government's) behavior in the future. Or, failing that (and this can be the implicit threat), the company may move their headquarters, or jobs, or whatever, depriving the government of its tax revenues or of its political

capital (because people who have lost jobs may become irate at the

government).

If we make it less affordable for companies to set themselves up in countries which seriously piss us off, they will communicate this to the governments of those countries one way or another, and that *will* have an effect on the governments of those countries, one way or another.

The children on the playground have it essentially correct.

Blixa
blixa.blogspot.com

by a reader on Wed, 12/17/2003 - 16:23 | [reply](#)